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Understanding stress in international students of higher education in a Mexican private university

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Abstract

This study presents the background of the theoretical models of culture shock and adaptation in international students in higher education. The Stress and Stressors that might be experience by these students is measured by the Perceives Stress Scale 10-Item version and Focus Groups and Interviews to Faculty and Staff Members of a Mexican Private University. Guidelines and procedures to Counselors are shared as well as the results and data obtained of this Mixed-Method Approach Study.

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1. Introduction

Now days, more private universities are trying to achieve a significant quality in their educational processes. One way of doing this is developing international exchange programs with other universities. The private university chosen for this study has an international program department in charge of promoting this exchange programs with foreign universities.

ouble degrees in some careers as well as Mexican students have the experience of studying one or two semesters in a prestigious university overboard, has become a very attractive opportunity.

As a result of these programs, this university has received foreign students from the US, Canada, France, Germany, China, Korea, Denmark, Australia, Japan and other countries. According to the data recovered from the International Department of the private Mexican university in 2007 they received 233 students, in 2008; 289 students, in 2009 265 students, and in 2010, 187 in the first semester.

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Therefore, the current situation has demanded a need to understand requirements and problems these students might deal in a daily bases. Furthermore, Faculty and Staff members are required to train and adapt their teaching techniques and their interpersonal communication skills, in and out of the classrooms, in order to support and assist their needs, such as any level of stress they might live with.

Nevertheless, the need to have studies and researches in this matter is essential in order to given a service of outstanding quality. This research pretends to give significant information in the study of Stress and Stressors foreign students might experience studying in a Mexican private university.

2. Literature review

2.1. Background

Systematic research on overseas students only appeared after the 1950's, when there was a flood of research on their social and psychological problems according to Ward, Bochner, and Furnham cited by Shuo, Jindal-Snape, Topping & Todman (2008).

Considering the limits established in this research the theory that best subscribes the areas considered are the Social skills and culture learning, having its epistemological origins in the social psychology originated by Argyle & Kendon in 1967 (Shuo, et al., 2008). This theory has its conceptual formulation in the lacking of social skills that may cause cross-cultural problems. "The social skills and culture learning perspective began to lay the foundation for the development of the culture learning model" (Shuo, et al., 2008, p.65).

The study of the term culture shock has been acquired from the social psychology as well as from education. On the other hand, the term Culture learning and stress and coping models have become well established as the social identification theories with a high level of prominence, according to Furnham and Bochner cited by Shuo, et al. (2008).

"These three contemporary theories are more comprehensive, considering the different components of response – affect, behavior and cognition (ABC) – when people are exposed to a new culture.... The notion of "culture shock" has been transformed into contact-induced stress accompanied by skills deficits that can be managed and ameliorated, and terms such as adaptation and acculturation have been increasingly used instead" (Shuo, et al., 2008, p. 65). Furnham and Bochner cited by Shuo, et al. "strongly advocated the social skills/cultural learning models, for its theoretical robustness and because it also led to training methods. This approach developed into contemporary culture learning theory" (2008, p. 65).

The term shock is perceived as a stimulus acquire from the reaction caused by the interaction of the new social environment, where new skills are required in order to be able to adapt. This process of adaptation can be influenced by various variables such as a general knowledge of the host culture; the time period in which the student will stayed in these new environment; as well as the level of proficiencies in his o her language communications skills.

Another aspect that differentiates the speed of adaptation is the abilities the student has to connect with other people. This is the number and type of new friends he or she is able to acquire in the host culture, the previous experience the student has abroad as well as the cultural identity will make significance in the adaptation processes.

The concept of shock approaches from stressful life changes such as the "cross-cultural encounters need to be resilient, adapt, and develop coping strategies and tactics" (Shuo, et al., 2008, p.65). The social identification theories focus on the cognitive components of the adaptation process....Two major conceptual approaches are used in social identification. The first is acculturation and the second is social identity theory according to Phinney cited by Shuo, et al. (2008, p.67).

According to Shuo, et al. (2008), there are three models of acculturation: The first one called uni-dimensional where the process of assimilation takes place and the person identifies and copes with the host culture become a new member of it. The bi-dimensional is a leveled model of acculturation and identity. That is, they developed a

bicultural identity. And the third called categorical. This model has four acculturation dispositions or strategies of how the person conceptualizes this home and host identities. These are: Integration- The individual perceives himself with a high level of identifications in regards with the host and his own culture, Separation- In this case, the person has a high level of home culture but a low in the host culture identification, Assimilation- On the contrary, the person has a low level in regards to his own home culture identification but a high in the host culture & Marginalization- In this case, the person perceives himself low in both, his own and the host culture identification.

The concept of Identity is affected by a wide range of factors, such as individual characteristics as age, gender and education level. As a group characteristic we have the permanence of cross-cultural relocation, the degree of motivation for migration, etc. and the broad social context such as the cultural pluralism, the level of prejudice and the degree of discrimination they might feel (Shuo, et al., 2008).

2.2. *Stress in Higher Education*

For college Students living and studying in a foreign country may demand an adjustment in a sociocultural, environmental and physiological way. It is during this process that a psychological stress could be present, such as anxiety, a sense of loss, loneliness, helplessness, and depression (Chen, 1999).

Stress occurs when these individuals perceive harm, threat or challenge exceeding their resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1991). According to these authors, harm refers to psychological damage that has been done in the past to this person. Threat is an anticipation of a harm that could be imminent in the students mind. Challenge involves difficulties in overcoming difficult situations mobilizing and deploying coping resources.

Stress is a complex multivariate process that includes an input such as a stressors or an event; an output as it would be the person's subjective reaction to the conditions of his ways of living and the mediating activities present in his standards of living that has an impact in the coping with the factors known as stressors (Lazarus, 1999). "From this perspective, international students' appraisal of stress may be defined as the process during which they assess and perceive their interactions with the host cultural environment" (Chen, 1999, p.51). When considering the differences between their own culture and the hosts we have to consider the level of adequate language skills, their own level of academic skills in relation with the native college students; as the social and interaction abilities they possessed.

On the other hand, Ishiyama cited by Chen (1999) believes that the difficulties in verbal and written communication (Spanish in the case of the Mexican private university UDEM as well as English for Asian college students attending the course of Culture of Mexico, course given in English for international students who doesn't have the level of skills acquired to attend the course in Spanish) may cause international students to feel uncomfortable in daily life and may lead to feelings of insecurity.

In this sense, Aubrey cited by Chen (1999) states that stressors fall into two categories: stressors related to the academic and educational environment, and stressors in the sociocultural and personal domain. Furthermore, some of the educational stressors may include performance expectations, system of adjustment and test-taking anxiety.

Considering that the international students are required to attend different courses, they have to adjust to different environments and different levels of demands in order to fulfill the academic requirements. Writing essays in a different language, performing in presentations as well as the daily interactions between peers in the classrooms may have a relevant significance in this sense.

The adjustment process may vary according to the level of skills and abilities of each student. Some may find it relatively easy to adjust once they get to know their teachers and classmates. But in other cases, because of their own skills and expectations this adjustment may have a difficult time to achieve. In terms of test-taking the language in which the tests are written may become a significant obstacle to overcome.

In a general perspective one of the main differences between Mexican college students vs. international students according the Mexican faculty members interview is the level of class participation. Some students

(Americans and Canadians) are used to ask and challenge their teachers. But Asians (Korean, Japanese, and Chinese) and some Europeans (German, French, and Turkish) are more prudent with the level of interaction sometimes even becoming silent students when expected to participate.

On the other hand, Asian students as used and accustom to follow instructions and have a high level of respect towards their teachers. In other words, the Asian system carries a strong notion of distance between professor and student to emphasize respect and order (Chen, 1999, p. 54).

Finally, two other stressors can be found and because of their relevance should be address and researched in a profound manner. Financial factors such as scholarships, expenses, costs of tuition and traveling expenses may become strong stressors especially for international students' adjusting to their new environment. As well as the racial prejudice that can still be present in some regions of the world. Color or skin, language, nationality, and even gender may be elements of hard acculturation process for international students in some cultures.

According to Schafer cited by Robotham & Julian (2006) stress can have a positive effect in students allowing them to respond in an effective way during an emergency. As well as taking into consideration that some level of stress will be present in a daily base in the life of college students. In this sense, there has been a lack of longitudinal studies posting the factors that cause them stress according to the student's perceptions of these factors. It's necessary to adopted for such matter a qualitative approach in its methodology in order to have a holistic perception of these matters.

As we stated before, some of the most common stressors experienced by college students include the examinations, time frame in their stay in the host country as well as the financial pressures that a foreign student could encounter.

According to Ross, Niebling, and Heckert, cited by Robotham & Juian (2006) the changes in their sleeping and eating habits, the increase in their new responsibilities and homework considering the language barrier that might have a negative effect in some students as well as the fear to failure in this new experience plus the parental pressure present in some cases cause a significant number of stressors to considered in international college students attending our higher educational universities.

Students respond to stress in varies ways according to Misra, McKean, West & Russo cited by Robotham & Julian (2006) "These responses can be categorized into emotional, cognitive, behavioural and physiological reactions" (p.112). In terms of emotional response we could find some level of fear, anxiety, guilt or depression; where as in the cognitive response there seems to be an increase in the stressful situations.

In relation with the behavioural we can find an abuse of himself or others, irritability to simple and small situations that wouldn't make a difference in these known surroundings and in a physiological response an increase of sweating, headaches, weight loss or gaining for such matter as well as presenting body aches.

It is common for international college students to feel stomach ache after long weekends blaming the food or water taken; as well as having a cold. This has been reported by some faculty members of the private university selected, giving courses to international students. According to Abouserie cited by Robotham & Julian (2006) approximately one in ten students may need professional support to reduce their levels of stress. On the other hand, many individuals would not admit they suffer from stress believing they could be perceived as weak increasing a peer pressure from colleagues becoming a stressor as Scott cited by Robotham & Julian (2006) states.

2.3. Strategies for Counselors and Faculty Members

"College counselors often need to modify traditional counseling theories and techniques to meet the particular needs of individual clients.....Becoming competent in multicultural issues, values, and beliefs of diverse clients may aid college counselors when working with a diverse population" (Olivas & Li, 2006, p.217) .

According to Ying and Liese cited by Olivas & Li (2006) in their research "Initial Adjustment of Taiwanese students to the United State" they found out that level of homesickness was the strongest predictor of poor adjustment.

On the other hand, in the study conducted by Mallinckrodt and Leong called “International graduate students, stress, and social support” cited by Olivas and Li (2006) the quality of the relationships between the foreign students and the faculty members, as well as quality of instruction and the continued presence of staff members interested in their own development can turn out to be a protective function to be well-being of the students undergoing their encounter stress. In this sense, it is convenient to take into consideration the eight strategies for positive adjustment to stress proposed by Tseng and Newton (2002) in their study called International students’ strategies for well-being: (1) Know self and others as to understand the similarities and differences between one’s own culture and the host culture. In this way, the transition between cultures will go smoother, (2) Make friends and build relationships as to learn to take advantage of friendship between your own peers. Other foreign students could be of great value in your stay in this new country. College students, faculty and staff members of the university can become allies helping overcome difficulties in during your stay, (3) Expand individual worldview as to “...enlarge one’s field of vision as well as to broaden one’s knowledge of the world is a significant way to strengthen individual adjustment capabilities” (Tseng & Newton, 2002, p.595), (4) Ask help and handle problems as to in order to be able to adjust efficiently, it’s adequate to ask for support and help to the staff members of the faculty in the host culture as well seeking for assistance to other peers in the college, this becomes a useful method to deal and solve the problems encountered, (5) Establish cultural and social contacts as to be open to participate in extracurricular activities as well as social events design by the international program department. This will be an excellent opportunity to get to know new acquaintances, (6) Build relationships with advisors and instructors as to the international students should keep an open mind and be flexible in order to build successful relationships with advisors as well as instructors assigned during his stay in the college, (7) Become proficient in the English language as in the case of international students attending the private university, it’s convenient to increase their level of proficiency in Spanish considering that they are attending courses in Spanish relating with Mexicans. Therefore, they have a diverse opportunity to increase their knowledge of the foreign language, and (8) Use the tactic of “Letting go” as to according to some students, the best way to lessen stress and gain well-being was learning to let go of situations they couldn’t resolve. Don’t give too much value to situations that can be left alone.

3. Purpose and methodology

3.1. *Purpose*

In order to understand Stress and its’ effects in International Students in Higher Education in a Mexican Private University in a holistic way, it is convenient to approach this study in a Mixed-Methodology.

From a methodological point of view, the majority of previous studies related to stress in higher education college students have focused on a quantitative approach, where participants complete a self-report inventory that claims to measure stress, well being or stressors (Robotham, 2008). Examples of these inventories are:

- The Hassles Assessment Scale for Students in College (Serafino, & Ewing, 1999).
- Student Life Stress Inventory (Gadzella, 1991).
- The College Chronic Life Stress Survey (Towbes, & Cohen, 1996).
- The Student Stress Scale (Insel, & Roth, 1985).
- The Academic Stress Scale (Abouserie, 1994)
- The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelstein, 1989)

Using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) 10-item version we will be able to measure the stress according to the Student’s point of view. In the Quantitative analysis the descriptive statistics will reflect the emotions and situations that might produce some degree of stress as well as the type of stressors present in the student’s life in this foreign university.

Using the statistical procedure of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) we could establish an analysis of the outcome using SPSS-18 in order to accept or refuse our null hypothesis stated as follows:

Ho - The level of stress is equal for the male international students as for the female international students.

Or on the other hand we could accept or refuse or alternative hypothesis stated as follows:

H1 - The level of stress is significantly different between the male international students vs. the female international students.

Taking into consideration the results obtained in these procedures, we will be able to proceed with the development of the Focus Groups (FG) in order to understand the effects of stress in their daily life in campus as well as the type of stressors perceived by the students in a subjective sense. We will also include two interviews with the academic staff, who are now days teaching courses to foreign students.

According to Green, Caraceli, and Graham cited by Sydenstricker (1997) among the purposes for a mixed-method evaluation design we can find five major highlights of evaluation which are: Triangulation, Complementarity, Development, Initiation, and Expansion.

In this sense, the study taking into consideration the triangulation will increase the chances of controlling some of the threats or multiple causes that might influence our results. In relation to the Complementarity we will use a diverse of instruments such as the PSS, interviews and focus groups in order to add information for the future analysis of data.

Once the PSS is applied we will be able to perform the Focus Groups (FG) developing the Analysis and Report according to this technique (Krueger, 1998); giving us the development as a result of this mixed-method approach. As a result of this, we will have an initiation stimulating new questions to the faculty professors adding more relevant information to this research.

3.2. *Sample*

A group of 62 international students arrived in the semester of autumn of 2011 and a sample of 57 students participated answering the surveys and a group of five from the sample collaborating in the focus group.

The sample was composed as follows: 27 males, 47.37% of the sample & 30 females, 52.63% of the sample.

Total of participants in the sample are 57 students from the following countries: Germany, México, Brazil, UK, France, Hong Kong, Australia, South Korea, China, Finish, USA, Netherlands, Turki, Japan, Canada, Spain and Switzerland.

3.3. *Instrument and Procedure*

3.3.1. *Quantitative Approach*

“Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) 10-item version is the most widely used psychological instrument for measuring the perception of stress; It is a measure of the degree to which situations in one’s life are appraised as stressful” (Cohen, 2005, p. 1). The items were designed to tap how unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded respondent international students find their lives. The scale also includes a number of direct queries about current levels of experienced stress, in a general perspective, the questions in the PSS ask about the feelings and thoughts during a period of the last month (Cohen, 2005).

The validation of this instrument can be found in the research paper Further Psychometric Support for the 1-Item Version of the Perceived Stress Scale from Roberti, Harrington & Storch (2006). The Cronbach's alpha reliability for the PSS of 10 items obtained by the authors using SPSS-10 is .89. The Cronbach's alpha obtained in our research using SPSS-18 is of .82.

The procedure established to apply the PSS, according to the authors, is to apply the instrument during the first two weeks of the arrival of the international students to the foreign university. With the data of this scale we will

be able to produce the interview guide questionnaire for our focus group (Morgan, 1998) in relation with the type of items ask in the 4th stage K-Q (Key Questions) of this technique.

3.3.2. Qualitative Approach

Focus Groups will be applied following the instruction of Morgan & Scannell (1998) of four steps: Planning, Recruiting, Moderating, and Analyzing and reporting with all the inside criteria that this technique implies in smaller groups for focus groups. The Questions to follow our structure for the FG include the following types: Opening, Introductory, Transition, Key and Ending questions according to Krueger (1998).

The moderating of the FG will include a moderator and two assistant moderators taking into consideration the structure offered by Kruger (1998) in relation with the responsibilities and skills applied in this qualitative approach. Once this process is completed all the data will be included in the corresponding formats added in the appendix along with the transcripts and full report for future use to the reader.

3.4. Data Analysis and Findings

3.4.1. Quantitative Analysis

Using the SPSS v-18 the results of the ANOVA of each item, as well as the Total Stress Level obtained are revealing a significant difference between genders in relation with the items 2, 3, 8, and 9. As well as the Total level of Stress obtained by summing across all scale items. (See Fig. 1).

Analyzing these results, the sense of not being able to control important issues are more frustrating for the female international students than for the male international students. Therefore, in the item 2 the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. In relation to the level of nervous and stress feelings, the female international students felt a higher level than the male international students. So the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted in relation to the item 3 of the scale used.

As far as the feeling of being “on top of things” the female students’ sense is higher vs. the male students, therefore there is higher level of stress related to the item 8. The null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. The item 9 is related to the level of anger when the student does not have control of outside issues. The level of female international students is higher vs. the male international students. The null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

According to the Perceived Stress Scale used, the Total level of Stress is higher in a significant degree according to the data obtained, there the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. In a general sense, we can find in all the rest of the items a relative difference, not as significant as in the items 2, 3, 8, and 9. Only in item 4 the level in the female students is lower than the male students. This item is related to the confidence in the ability to handle personals problems, where the male has a higher level of ability in this sense.

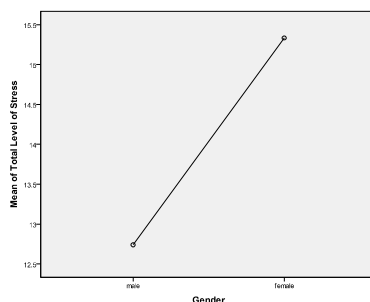


Fig.1.

But in terms of the Total Level of Stress gained, the level is significant higher for the female students as these affirmations are shown in the means plots showed as follows:

Table 1. The Cronbach's alpha obtained in the research = 0.820

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
item 1	Between Groups	.044	1	.044	.080	.778
	Within Groups	30.167	55	.548		
	Total	30.211	56			
item 2	Between Groups	3.194	1	3.194	2.167	.147
	Within Groups	81.052	55	1.474		
	Total	84.246	56			
item 3	Between Groups	3.294	1	3.294	4.050	.049
	Within Groups	44.741	55	.813		
	Total	48.035	56			
item 4	Between Groups	.928	1	.928	.837	.364
	Within Groups	60.967	55	1.108		
	Total	61.895	56			
item 5	Between Groups	1.156	1	1.156	1.252	.268
	Within Groups	50.774	55	.923		
	Total	51.930	56			
item 6	Between Groups	.187	1	.187	.179	.674
	Within Groups	57.707	55	1.049		
	Total	57.895	56			
item 7	Between Groups	.702	1	.702	.629	.431
	Within Groups	61.333	55	1.115		
	Total	62.035	56			
item 8	Between Groups	2.274	1	2.274	2.613	.112
	Within Groups	47.867	55	.870		
	Total	50.140	56			
item 9	Between Groups	5.970	1	5.970	5.638	.021
	Within Groups	58.241	55	1.059		
	Total	64.211	56			
item 10	Between Groups	.395	1	.395	.361	.551
	Within Groups	60.167	55	1.094		
	Total	60.561	56			
Total Level of Stress	Between Groups	95.517	1	95.517	2.497	.120
	Within Groups	2103.852	55	38.252		
	Total	2199.368	56			

3.4.2. Qualitative Analysis

The Focus group was active and the students were participative along the session. According to the structure planned the session was prepared before hands with a series of questions, begging with some ice breakers to start the interaction.

Then, the questions were focus on their perception of stress experienced so far in their first two weeks in the city. In this sense, the general perception of the group was that it was more the dangerous the idea spread in their own countries before arriving to Monterrey, Mexico than their own reality lived so far.

Parents and friends were concerned of the news in the media such as newspapers and news broadcast on TV. So far, their impression was overwhelming in terms of the friendliness they have experienced with peers and

teacher's staff. When asked about the way they were treated in the classrooms four out of five responded that the professors would extend the deadline of assignments and reports considering they might be traveling around the country. That special treatment was considered "cool" to them.

On the other hand, they all felt a sense of help from peers in relation to instructions not cleared to them, especially with the foreign students learning Spanish in the beginner's levels. But they were all "shock" to have to spend too much time in classes hearing the professors repeat themselves explaining the right way of cite authors in academic papers as well as regular instructions already given in earlier classes.

Three out of five students were "against" the rules in their classes of the professors taking assistant in a daily bases. They mentioned that in their universities in Germany, France and Australia the students could attend to their own discretion considering their own personal agenda and level of commitment to the specific class. In other words, they felt like being back in High School with this action from the professors.

In terms of their perception of stress with this examples and situations explained before, they all agreed they felt a 3.5 level of stress in a scale of 1 through 5. They also felt stressed in relation to their assignments considering they were taking 4 to 6 subject each and having only a week between the instructions and directions given to do this assignments and a week later as a deadline to hand them in for evaluation. Three out of five students mentioned that in their universities they would have instructions hand them to them at the begging of the course and a deadline dated to deliver them in advances given them at least one to two weeks to accomplish their assignments.

They also distinguish the difference between their own professors and the Mexican ones in relation to appointments that could be previously establish with them to check-up advances in their projects and to have recommendations to their own personal topics assigned. They felt in a significant degree, 4 from a scale of 1 to 5, they were wasting their time listening to some Mexican students complained in class in relation to their projects as well as asking the same questions over and over again in terms of the form of their projects and assignments.

As far as their personal safety, they all felt safe in the university and their social life visiting the outsides of the city. They all felt surprised with the level of friendliness from their own peers as well as the staff members of the university. They all felt a high level of support from the staff members of the International program of the exchange students from the university, as well as their own professors in and out of their classrooms.

The stress they felt was stated as far as homework and exams were concerned not knowing if they would be able to understand the written spanish taking into consideration that four out of five we also taking several courses from their own mayors in spanish with Mexican peers.

4. Discussion and implications

4.1. Institutional Procedures to Support International Students

The staff members of the Dept. of International Students are personal trained to deal with the problems concerning the affairs exchange students might go through along their stay in the institution.

As far as their integration with their Mexican peers, all foreign students are part of the integration program consisting of the support and friendship offered by Mexican students volunteers, who as part of their social service program, help new international students with academic support in terms of answering questions related to campus offices and procedures that they have to deal with.

On the other hand, they offered their time and support as well as in their personal interest of getting to know the "cool" places to hang out and have distractions younger's might be interest in. The Dept. of International Student's has several programs as housing is concerned. Not only has the private university the possibility to offered housing in their dormitories facilities including their shared or individual bedroom, as well as the complete facilities in the buildings of housing including gym, tennis and football courts, tracking field and cafeterias and restaurants inside the institution; As well as their copy centers, library, social spots, theater, book

shop and chapel according to their regular schedules. All students, as well as faculty members, can use the taxi program where a staff of safe drivers with register cars are able to take them into the city and downtown areas having a safe trip round trip.

On the other hand, foreign student might want to rent a studio or department sharing with other international students. They have access to the institution database of renters who are checked by the Dept. of International Students. This data base also includes Mexican families willing to accommodate foreign students who might need a place to stay and also those who are interested in interacting with natives from this country being able to practice and learn more spanish in a daily bases. Most of these families have youngsters that can also interact with them. Therefore, this option is one of the most required form the international students arriving each semester.

As far as the faculty members, professors have full access to the support and guidance from the trained professional in relation to possible awkward situations that might need attendance. The profiles of faculty members are professors with teaching experience to foreign students from university level. Each professor has also the support of the director of each department according to the subject and course given. For example, the language department is directed by a foreign experiences academic who is in charge of Mexican and foreign professors teaching to Mexican and foreign students several languages according to the demands of academic needs.

In the case of academic courses taken from different career programs, the faculty members are available to tutoring session previously scheduled by appointments to help those students (Mexican or foreign) who might feel the need of support. Furthermore, must professors would request collaborative assignments integrating foreign students with Mexicans students willing to help their peers with the care required in several study sessions in the library and classroom activities.

4.2. Factors of Stress Affecting Learning according to Faculty Members

According to the interviews of three faculty members, the most common factors affecting international students are as follows:

The level of domain of Spanish in order to succeed in classes taught in Spanish. When you have a group of 25 Mexican students you can't stop all the time to attend the special needs of the international students. When this case shows up, we recommend to the foreign student the possibility of taking the course in English until they feel more confident to take the course in Spanish with the rest of the peers.

The need to adapt and respect rules in the class as far as the attendance policies. Most of the foreign students demand free will in terms of their attendance records arguing they have previous plans of traveling during their weekends not being able to dedicate 100% to their courses. The foreign students need to program their social activities according to the time off left after completing their academic needs.

The ability of adapting to a different strategy of teaching in a Mexican private university. The profiles and needs of their Mexican peers might be different to the one they might experience. Therefore, they must take into consideration these differences before having a negative attitude in class.

Finally, the three faculty members acknowledged the need of informing foreign students they must try to adapt their learning skills in relation to the outlines of assignments per week or by terms as the academic programs is structured. The flexibility teachers can have, are limited in numbers of opportunities appeared avoiding the claims of their Mexican peers feeling unfairly treated in class. The balance must be taken care of by the professors in order to have a successful course with Mexicans and foreign students.

5. Future study and limitations

The research team acknowledges the need to study furthermore the perceptions of stress in foreign students in relation to their interaction with the Mexican professors. According to the answers given by students and faculty members, their points of views are opposite to a balance terms of performance requested and needed.

In this sense, a tutorial guidance class must be offered to those foreign students in need of an extra support, as showed in the outcome of the focus group analyzed.

In terms of the instrument applied the research team felt satisfied with the obtained results, taking into consideration the time assigned to this research.

We also have to acknowledged and thank the support and help received by the Department of International Students, Directors of the Language and the Humanity Department, as well as the academic staff members interviewed along this research, and all the international students who participated in surveys and interviews.

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